

That flokmele on a day they to hym wente,
And oon of hem that wisest was of loore,
Or elles that the lord best wolde assente
That he sholde telle hym what his peple mente,
Or elles koude he shewe wel swich mateere,
He to the markys seyde as ye shul heere.

O noble markys, youre humanitee
Assureth us and yeveth us hardinesse,
As ofte as tyme is of necessitee
That we to yow mowe telle oure hevynesse;
Accepteth, lord, now for youre gentillesse,
That we with pitous herte unto yow pleyne,
And lat youre eres nat my voys desceyve.

Al have I noght to doone in this mateere
Moore than another man hath in this place,
Yet forasmuche as ye, my lord so deere,
Han alwey shewed me favour and grace,
I dar the better aske of yow a space
Of audience, to shewen oure requeste,
And ye, my lord, to doon right as yow leste.

for certes, lord, so wel us liketh yow
And al youre werk, and evere han doon, that we
Ne koude nat us self devyysen how
We myghte lyven in moore felicitye,
Save o thyng, lord, if it youre wille be,
That for to been a wedded man yow leste,
Thanne were youre peple in sovereyn hertes reste.

Boweth youre nekke under that blisful yok
Of soveraynetee, noght of servyse,
Which that men clepeth spousaille or wedlok;
And thenketh, lord, among youre thoghtes wyse,
How that oure dayes passe in sondry wyse;
for thogh we slepe, or wake, or rome, or ryde,
Hy fleeth the tyme, it nyl no man abyde.

And thogh youre grene youthe floure as yit,
In crepeth age alwey, as stille as stoon,
And deeth manaceth every age, and smyt
In ech estat, for ther escapeth noon;
And al so certein as we knowe echoon
That we shul deye, as uncerteyn we alle
Been of that day whan deeth shal on us falle.

Accepteth thanne of us the trewe entente,
That nevere yet refuseden thyn heeste,
And we wol, lord, if that ye wol assente,
Chese yow a wyf in short tyme, atte leeste,
Born of the gentilleste and of the meeste
Of al this land, so that it oghte seme
Honour to God and yow, as we kan deeme.

Delivere us out of al this bisy drede,
And taak a wyf, for hye Goddes sake;
for if it so bifelle, as God forbede,
That thurgh youre deeth youre lyne sholde
slake,
And that a straunge successour sholde take
Your heritage, O, wo were us alyve!
Wherfore we pray yow hastily to wyve.

IR meeke preyere, and hir pitous cheere,
Made the markys herte han pitee.
Ye wol, quod he, myn owene peple deere,
To that I nevere erst thoughte streyne me.
I me rejoysed of my libertee,
That seelde tyme is founde in mariage;
Ther I was free, I moot been in servage.

But natheless, I se youre trewe entente,
And trust upon youre wit, and have doon ay;
Wherfore, of my free wyl, I wole assente
To wedde me, as soone as evere I may.
But theas ye han profred me this day
To chese me a wyf, I yow relese
That choys, and prey yow of that profre cesse.

for God it woot, that children ofte been
Unlyk hir worthy eldres hem bifore;
Bountee comth al of God, nat of the streen
Of which they been engendred and ybore;
I truste in Goddes bountee, and therfore
My mariage, and myn estat and reste,
I hym bitake; he may doon as hym leste.

Lat me allone in chesynge of my wyf,
That charge upon my bak I wol endure;
But I yow prey, and charge upon youre lyf,
That what wyf that I take, ye me assure
To worshipec hire, whil that hir lyf may dure,
In word and werk, bothe heere and everywhere,
As she an emperours doghter weere.

And forthermoore, this shal ye swere, that ye
Agayn my choys shul neither grucche ne stryve;
for sith I shal forgoon my libertee
At your requeste, as evere moot I thryve,
Theras myn herte is set, ther wol I wyve;
And, but ye wole assente in this manere,
I prey yow, spekeþ namoore of this matere.

WICH hertely wyl they sworn, and as-
sente
To al this thyng, ther seyde no wight na;
Bisekyng hym of grace, er that they wenten,
That he wolde graunten hem a certein day
Of his spousaille, as soone as evere he may;
for yet alwey the peple somewhat dredde
Lest that this markys no wyf wolde wedde.

He graunten hem a day, swich as hym leste,
On which he wolde be wedded sikerly,
And seyde, he dide al this at hir requeste;
And they, with humble entente, buxomly
Knelyng upon hir knees ful reverently,
Hym thonken alle; and thus they han an ende
Of hire entente, and boon agayn they wende.

And heerupon he to his officers
Comaundeth for the feste to purveye;
And to his privee knyghtes and squieres
Swich charge yaf, as hym liste on hem leye;
And they to his comandement obeye,
And ech of hem dooth al his diligence
To doon unto the feste reverence.

Explicit prima pars.



Incipit secunda pars.



FER FRO THILKE PALAYS HONUR-
ABLE

Theras this markys shoop his mariage,
Ther stood a throop, of site delitable,
In which that poure folk of that village
Hadden hir beestes and hir herbergage,
And of hire labour tooke hir sustenance,
After that the erthe yaf hem habundance.

AMONGES thise poure folk ther
dwelte a man
Which that was holden povrest of
hem alle;
But hye God som tyme senden kan
His grace into a litel oxes stalle:
Janicula men of that throop hym calle.
A doghter hadde he, fair ynogh to sighte,
And Grisildis this yonge mayden highte.

But for to speke of vertuous beautee,
Thanne was she oon the faireste under sonne;
for povrelliche yfostred up was she,
No likerous lust was thurgh hire herte yronne;
Wel ofter of the welle than of the tonne
She drank, and for she wolde vertu plesse,
She knew wel labour, but noon ydel ese.

But thogh this mayde tendre were of age,
Yet in the brest of hire virginitee
Ther was enclosed rype and sad corage,
And in greet reverence and charitee
Hir olde poure fader fostred shee;
A fewe sheep, spynnyng, on feild she kepte,
She wolde noght been ydel til she slepte.

And whan she homward cam, she wolde bryng
Wortes, or other herbes, tymes ofte,